DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 391 245 EA 027 311

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TITLE	Vermont Interdependent Services Team Approach: A Guide to Coordinating Educational Support Services.
REPORT NO	ISBN-1-55766-230-4
PUB DATE	96
CONTRACT	H025S40003
NOTE	158p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company, P.O. Box 10624, Baltimore, MD 21285-0624 (Stock No. 2304; $26).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Cooperative Learning; *Cooperative Planning; *Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; *Integrated Services; Interprofessional Relationship; Participative Decision Making; Professional Personnel; Services; *Special Needs Students; Staff Meetings; *Team Training; Teamwork
IDENTIFIERS	*Vermont Interdependent Services Team Approach

ABSTRACT

In recognition of the limitations of isolated decision making, teamwork has emerged as a preferred approach for educating students both with and without disabilities. The Vermont Interdependent Services Team Approach (VISTA) process described in this manual offers ways to think about and implement many of the tenets of collaborative teamwork to make support-services decisions for students with disabilities. The manual was designed as a self-study process that enables educators, administrators, support services providers, family members, and other team members to work together more efficiently to expand students' educational opportunities. The introduction focuses on the process of developing a shared framework. Section 2 reviews current issues in educational support services and offers a rationale for establishing collaborative services. Initial research shows that use of the VISTA approach improves intrateam agreement about support-services provision, reduces gaps and overlaps among members, and improves satisfaction with team decision making. Section 3 offers 10 detailed guidelines for establishing a team, defining the components of the educational program, determining functions of providers and their interrelatedness, making service recommendations, building consensus, determining location and strategies for service provision, and engaging in ongoing implementation and evaluation. The fourth section provides directions for preparing for and conducting the VISTA meeting. Nine tables and a variety of forms and worksheets are included. Appendices contain a description of support services, a checklist and forms, and examples of VISTA approaches for various special-needs students. (Contains 53 references and 14 recommended readings.) (LMI)

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